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ABSTRACT

Some relevant issues concerning the mentoring of women and minorities in the realm of higher education are addressed, primarily focusing on the differences and problems that exist in assisting these two groups of professionals in achieving their career goals. The importance of mentoring and methods that can be used by a mentor in assisting the protege are described, as well as suggestions for improving the quality of the mentoring relationship. In addition, a list of reasons why highly intelligent people either do not succeed or underachieve is provided to assist the mentor in recognizing areas of potential or current difficulty. Two particular problems that sometimes arise when women are being mentored (finding the appropriate mentor and male chauvinism) are discussed, as well as the unique problems involving assisting minorities, which include their difficulties with culture shock, feelings of isolation, and the lack of an established professional support system. Ways in which a mentor can help the mentoring process be more successful for women and minorities are listed and include specific areas of professional skills development. The mentor can provide help in developing coping and stress management skills. Contains 21 references.

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Mentoring Women and Minorities In Higher Education

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Abstract

While much has been written on mentoring, few writers have addressed the specific problems in assisting women and minorities. This article discusses various aspects of mentoring relative to women and minorities and addresses specific issues of concern.

Are there really true differences in mentoring women and minorities in the realism of higher education ? Are there differences in terms of time expended or are there true specific concerns that should be addressed? Obviously fields vary, institutions differs and agencies vary from place to place. This paper will discuss some relevant issuers of concern and review agendas salient to both women and minorities.

In education, one way for the novice to "get ahead" is to obtain a mentor. Typically, the mentor is older, wiser, "knows the ropes" and is respected in a field of endeavor. The mentor knows the organization. The pitfalls of office politics and the skull duggery of back stabbing in the competitive realm. The protege procures knowledge, experience, and gets "the lay of the land " in their port of entry. The mentor profits as he or she assists others and engenders the respect of their colleagues.

Michael Zey (1984) has written extensively on "The Mentor Connection" and how helpful a knowledgeable facilitator can be. Levenson(1978) has indicated the place of the mentor in the male life cycle while Torrance (1984) has penned a book relative to the mentor relationship-- why it succeeds, how it endures, why it changes, and why it often fails and dies, Shaughnessy (1986, 1987a, 1987b) has

written on mentoring creative children, gifted freshmen, and highly talented children and prodigies.

The Mentor as Role Model

Shaun Murphy (1986) has discussed the mentor as role model in the domain of adult development. Murphy juxtapose Zey's view of the mentor with Daniel Levinson's perspective. Zey sees the mentor as a means to an end; a stepping stone; a ring in the climb on the ladder of success. On the other hand, Levinson perceives the mentor as a model to emulate. The mentor may have personality traits worth assimilating. He or she may be loyal, courteous, honest, and hard working. They may exemplify certain qualities, traits, or ideas seen as positive. The protege may admire certain characteristics and may want to imitate the mentor.

The mentor should realize that he or she is a role model and fashion their behavior accordingly. People do not realize the influence they have over others' behavior. If the mentor is honest, reliable, scrupulous, and has much integrity, the protege will imitate those virtues. When mentoring women and minorities, the mentor must be aware of the values and culture of their charges. The mentor needs to be aware of their own value system and cultural beliefs and how these interact with and manifest themselves within their protege's own world view.

With the advent of <u>women's</u> liberation, more and more women <u>are</u> entering the work force. Apparently, mentors are

critical for a women's professional growth and development (Douvan 1976, Erkut and Mokros, 1984). Women, however, appear to seek role models who are able to integrate both a successful home and career life. Halcomb (1980) has a text regarding mentors and the successful woman. Daloz (1986) views the mentor as a guide whose major task "is to challenge students to challenge themselves" (p. 229). Daloz presents several methods by which a mentor can aid his/her protege.

1). Modeling. One of the processes that occurs in the mentor relationship is that of identification. The student or protege may see a personality or level of Skill or knowledge in the mentor that he/she desires. Through this the mentor serves as a model to their protege.

2). Keeping tradition. Mentors serve as a knowledge base for their associates/protege/calleagues (whatever term you prefer). In this, mentors pass on the tradition of curiosity and how our minds operate. The Knowledge itself is not the tradition, but the process of acquiring the knowledge is the tradition.

3). Offering a map. A good mentor helps the protege/colleague to develop his/her own plans for the future and a way of achieving that which he/she wishes to accomplish. The special interest the mentor takes in their protege helps foster the growth of this map. This map may lead the way to promotion, tenure, or success in the field.

4). Suggesting NEW language. This implies providing the protege with new ways to think about or conceptualize reality. The frame of reference of the associate/protege expands to take on entirely different meanings. People learn to look at familiar problems in new ways.

5). Providing a mirror. The mentoring relationship should expand a persons awareness of self. People should receive feed back so they may critically analyze their thinking and their own development. Theism domain coincides well with point number three - Is the protege sticking to his/her long range goals?

Daloz (1986, pp. 239-243) offers five suggestions for improving the quality of the mentoring relationship we provide.

1) We can begin listening to our protege/associate stories.

2) We can view ourselves as guides.

3) We can plan our meeting to promote development.

4) We can turn to and bring together others who share our concerns.

5) We can recognize that in part, our own growth depends on our proteges.

Young women face special problems in establishing a mentor relationship. The importance of mentors whether they be male or female has been demonstrated by Hennig and Jardim (1977) in their study of successful women executives. Young

women, however, appear to face special problems in establishing a mentor relationship.

A major problem is finding an appropriate mentor. Men tend to avoid women mentors; however, women are more likely to use them--if they are available. A person may have few possibilities for women mentors in a particular area of interest. When there is a possibility the next problem may be that of whether the woman is willing to act as a mentor rather than just a role model. Mentoring is playing an active role in the development of another. Some women are not willing to risk becoming involved in this type of relationship. This seems to be especially true when the woman has worked her way into a field that is traditionally considered a male field. Yoder, Adams, Grovl and Priest (1985) found this to be the case of women cadets who were part of the first class of women to be admitted to a military academy.

Younger women also find it difficult to have an older man as a mentor (Odiorne, 1985). Social pressures and concern about appearances to others may make some men reluctant to mentor a younger women. These problems may restrict the number of mentors available for younger women.

In failing to serve as mentors for young women, are we increasing the likelihood that they will not be willing to mentor another young woman? Mentoring is a highly valuable activity both for the mentor and the protege. Gerstein

(1985) suggests that the benefits that befall the mentee also work to the advantage of the mentor. Many women do not realize this. Although they may have found it difficult to find an appropriate mentor, they can still take advantage of this relationship by serving as mentors themselves.

Another problem involved in the mentoring relationship for young women is that of the "prevalence of male chauvinism" within the environment (Rogan, 1984). One of the characteristics of a good mentor is that he or she is in a position to really foster the development of the protege. However many women feel that they are treated differently than their male counterparts within the work force. Young women who are seeking mentors will find it risky then to select as a mentor someone who does not have much power within the system, but they may also find it difficult to find men to serve as mentors.

Men may have less patience in terms of mentoring to women who may be wives and mothers and who have less time to contribute to research and academic endeavors. Deadlines for grants, paper submissions and conferences may not be met due to children's illnesses, family duties and other obligations. For the single parent female, this can be a major concern. Time management and long range planning are imperative.

Whether mentoring to females or minorities, it is important for the mentor to deal with personality traits and other impediments which may impede or hinder success.

Sternberg (1986) has posted the following reasons why highly intelligent people either do not succeed or "underachieve":

1. Lack of motivation
2. Lack of impulse control
3. Lack of perseverance or preservation
4. Capitalizing on the wrong abilities
5. Inability in translating thought into action
6. Lack of product orientation
7. Task completion problems and lack of follow through
8. Failure to imitate
9. Fear of failure
10. Procrastination
11. Misattribution of blame
12. Excessive self pity
13. Excessive dependency
14. Wallowing in personal difficulties
15. Distractibility and lack of concentration
16. Spreading oneself too thick or too thin
17. Inability to delay gratification
18. Inability or unwillingness to see the forest from the tees.
19. Lack of balance between critical analytic thinking creative synthetic thinking
20. Too little or too much self confidence (pp. 339-345)

Mentors can address the relevant aforementioned issues, facilitate improvement and work to enhance the protege's strengths while helping him or her to compensate for their

weaknesses. Some people are successful and "winners" simply because as Waitley says "Winners work at things the majority of the population are not willing to do" (p. 214). The mentor should keep in mind the other side of the picture, that is impediment (i.e., no support system, implied or covert sexual or racial discriminatin, etc.) that exist or may exist within the organization.

Mentoring Minorities

The Hispanic, Black, American Indian, Chicano, Laotian or Asian American may need additional assistance/mentoring support or they may face different types of challenges and concerns in higher education. A support system of colleagues may be lacking. Loneliness, isolation and alienation may be emotional concerns which need to be addressed. Relocation may even need to be a final alternative when all else fails. I am reminded of a Hasidic faculty member in a rural agrarian football oriented university. While his peers gave their all to support and assist him, the culture shock and lack of community support finally proved overwhelming. He relocated to an urban, academic environment and is now doing well.

On going family support may prove more sustaining than mentoring. A new faculty member may need to develop their own academic "family" of students and colleagues. By helping a new minority faculty member mentor other minority students, two goals may be accomplished. The new faculty

member will gain confidence, status and prestige and develope their own network of students. Secondly, the students will benefit from the role model, the assistance and from the mentoring. Helping new faculty get involved in research, publishing and presenting is also important. Isolation should be avoided.

Wright and Wright (1987) have indicated that the literature is basically void in terms of the specific issues minorities do encounter. They are at a real disadvantage because role models are few and far between and colleagues are often not interested in their research domains. One new sociology professor was interested in Black ghetto kids drug use. The rest of his department was more theoretically oriented and ideologically committed. He was not only sans a mentor, but odd man out. By going outside his department for support, he also alienated some of his colleagues. He did publish with a psychology member interested in criminal justice and finally developed a network of colleagues scattered about the U.S. He finally procured tenure after much hard work, and support system building. This time period was emotionally draining for him and of course frustrating.

Should different evaluative criteria be established for women (particularly those with children) and minorities (who have no role models/mentors)? Sticky issues indeed. Issues of relevance - certainly!

The Mentor as Teacher of Coping Skills

The mentor can assist both women and minorities in institutional advancement by the teaching of specific skills and the teaching of coping skills. Some of these skills may be minor, but can assist the protege in procuring promotion and advancement. Some of these skills are:

1. Time Management Skills-particularly important for women who are also wives and mothers
2. People Management Skills (with colleagues, graduate students, undergrads, secretaries)
3. Money Management Skills (where to get institutional money for research, grant writing etc.)
4. Organizational Skills-research, writing delegation of duties to graduate assistants.
5. Travel Skills-how to get from Bangor Maine, to Omaha, Nebraska to present a paper at a national conference.
   b) how to get from the airport to the conference center
   c) how to have a hotel room waiting
   d) how to do all of the above inexpensively
6. Prioritization Skills-attending a committee meeting versus submitting an abstract for a conference
7. Procurement Skills-Where's the money for research? What conferences are coming up? What journals need/want papers?
8. Publication Skills-What are the journals looking for? What do they want?
9. Presentation Skills-What conferences are important? How many should I attend?

10. Writing Skills-Some new faculty have excellent "abstract" writing skills and very good writing for publication skills. Sadly others may have weak writing skills or may simply not enjoy writing/research and publishing. These are very important issues for both mentor and proteges. Typically, tenure can be procured if publication list is lengthy and one's teaching evaluations are average. However, good teaching evaluations and minimal publications presents a major concern. The old "publish or perish" dictum is still very much with us. Women, minorities and WASP's are <u>all</u> still expected to publish research, and engage in scholarly activity. Presentations at state, regional, national, and international conferences are often recognized as "scholarly activity" but are still not held in a high esteem as publication in referred journals

Further, the mentor can teach coping skills and stress management techniques. These include

1. Coping with failure/rejection/bad evaluations
2. Coping with difficult people-bosses, subordinates- (see Bramson, 1981).
3. Dealing with set backs.
4. Coping with conflicting demands i.e. work versus family. This is especially relevant for women, although more and more men report feeling the conflict
5. Dealing with transitions-to other positions, other

departments, a new Chair, a new Dean

6. Coping with prolonged family separations due to being "on the road" to present/attend conferences
7. Juggling job, family and other civic duties and responsibilities
8. Allowing time for hobbies, relaxation and recreation
9. Allowing time for self and personal development and growth
10. Sparing time for friends, acquaintances and colleagues "away from work"
11. Scheduling yearly medical/dental check up
12. Practicing preventative medicine-regular exercise, regular diet, time for relaxation and self-renewal

Certainly all of the above are salient for all those in higher education. However, it may be imperative to reiterate the importance of these to some minorities who may over look certain of these domains. Some of the following are particularly important.

1. A specific time set aside to keep up with journals, the professional literature and the chronicle of Higher Education.
2. Networking both internally and externally.
3. Membership in professional organizations and attendance at these meetings.
4. Procuring a position on an editorial board or similar publication.
5. Awareness of your organization efforts to aid/assist

minorities, and SIG's (Special Interest Groups) dedicated to mutual support or specific issues.

Some final concerns and comments

Should women/minorities be mentored differently than others? Sadly, research is lacking in this area. Should mentoring for de jure or de facto discrimination be a concern? Perhaps a paper in and of itself? In an age of blind/peer review, need we worry? These are provocative issues which will surely not be settled here in this brief article. With the impending shortage of doctoral level people in the 90's perhaps the issue is even moot. But if the issue is one of advancement, this article has at least offered a foundation for mentoring women and minorities in higher education while raising some very salient issues of concern.

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